NEWS LESSON

Can a Government Make Dating Less Exhausting?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Would you let a friend choose a date for you?
2. Does having more choice make choosing easier?
3. What would make a dating app feel less tiring?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**precedents**	☐	A	earlier cases that are used as an example for later ones
2	**demographic**	☐	B	about the make-up and size of a population
3	**algorithm**	☐	C	a set of rules a computer follows to solve a problem
4	**aspirations**	☐	D	strong hopes of achieving something in life
5	**marketplace**	☐	E	a place or system where things are bought and sold
6	**fatigue**	☐	F	make something as large or as great as possible
7	**pilot**	☐	G	a state of being very tired
8	**maximise**	☐	H	a small trial of a new scheme before wider use

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Singapore's government technology agency is testing a dating service that offers one introduction at a time. It is a small pilot, with open questions about trust and privacy.

1 There is a particular kind of fatigue that comes from endlessly reviewing strangers as potential romantic partners. Dating apps offer so many profiles that many users describe feeling overwhelmed. Singapore's FirstDate project tries a quieter approach: fewer profiles and one introduction at a time. More surprisingly, it comes from the government's own technology agency.

2 Developed by staff at GovTech and being piloted among unmarried public-service employees aged 21 to 35, FirstDate asks participants about their habits, preferences and values. It applies a form of the Gale-Shapley stable-matching algorithm to recommend pairings, then allows both parties to accept or decline an introduction. Profiles are visible only to proposed matches, and contact details are exchanged solely by mutual agreement. The designers present the system as an experiment in more considered dating rather than another marketplace of faces.

3 Its existence nevertheless invites questions about the role of the state in intimate life. Singapore has long expressed concern about low fertility and an ageing population, and official efforts to encourage relationships have precedents stretching back decades. In that context, even a modest matchmaking pilot acquires a wider significance.

4 Is it simply an employee service, or another attempt to address the demographic consequences of delayed marriage and parenthood? Its creators are careful to sidestep that framing, describing the platform as a pilot aimed at improving the experience of dating rather than a lever for raising the birth rate.

5 A successful match, of course, is an ambiguous measure. The Gale-Shapley method can identify pairings that satisfy a particular set of preferences, but romantic attraction cannot be reduced to a mathematical score. Shared values may help two people agree on the important things; they cannot guarantee emotional warmth, good timing or a sense of humour. Nor can any algorithm resolve the structural pressures facing younger adults, including expensive housing, professional demands and the considerable financial commitments associated with raising children.

6 The privacy questions are equally delicate. A platform that asks users to describe their preferences, habits and relationship aspirations collects information they may be reluctant to hand over to an employer-connected system. FirstDate says the data is handled under government security standards and is not sold to commercial third parties. Those commitments matter, but trust will depend on transparency and how the service operates in practice. Participation must remain a genuine choice if a well-intentioned initiative is to avoid feeling intrusive.

7 There is also something refreshing about a dating service that declines to maximise the time users spend browsing. Commercial platforms often benefit when people keep returning; FirstDate proposes that a more limited selection could serve users better. Whether a narrower choice produces more lasting relationships has yet to be demonstrated, and a pilot of this size is unlikely to settle the question. For now, the platform remains a public-service pilot, with no decision about expansion.

Sources: Al Jazeera. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The designers see FirstDate as the opposite of a service that encourages users to keep browsing. T F NG
2. The creators of FirstDate say its main purpose is to raise Singapore's birth rate. T F NG
3. A decision on expanding the pilot is expected next year. T F NG
4. Official interest in couples' relationships in Singapore is not new. T F NG
5. The writer believes a good algorithmic match would guarantee emotional warmth. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

ambiguous	considered	dismissive	intimate	overwhelmed	reckless	refreshing	reluctant

1. The committee's reply was deliberately _____ , leaving both camps free to claim it supported them.
2. Several witnesses were _____ to speak openly, fearing the consequences for their careers.
3. Faced with forty-seven pages of conflicting advice, the new recruits felt thoroughly _____ .
4. After weeks of evasive answers, the minister's candid admission was _____ .
5. The memoir reveals _____ details of her marriage that she had never discussed in public.
6. A more _____ approach to spending, weighing each purchase carefully, left the family better off.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Falling _____ rates have left several countries worrying about who will care for their ageing populations. (FERTILE)
2. Critics say higher pay alone will not fix the deeper _____ problems that keep young people from buying homes. (STRUCTURE)
3. Public confidence in the scheme will depend largely on its _____ about how data is used. (TRANSPARENT)
4. Moving abroad was a _____ risk, but she judged that the opportunity justified it. (CONSIDER)
5. The developers insisted that the app was a public service rather than a _____ venture. (COMMERCE)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At C1, adjective and verb pairings carry precise meaning. Notice the whole phrase, such as set a precedent or a vested interest, and learn it as one unit.

bear	mounting	raise	set	stark	vested	wage

1. Granting one company access would _____ a worrying precedent for the whole sector.
2. There is _____ evidence that endless scrolling harms concentration, although researchers disagree about the cause.
3. Several board members had a _____ interest in keeping the contract with the existing supplier.
4. The two services offer a _____ contrast: one rewards constant browsing, the other limits users to a single introduction.
5. Analysts warned that the policy could _____ serious privacy concerns if safeguards were weak.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Would one carefully chosen introduction beat hundreds of profiles?
2. Would government involvement make you trust a dating service more or less?
3. What should people be able to decide without an app's help?

9 Role-play: should I try a one-match dating service?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the friend who is tired of dating apps

You have used dating apps for months and feel worn out. Your friend suggests a service that gives you one match at a time. You are curious but worried about privacy. Ask questions before you decide.

Student B · the friend with the idea

You read about a service that introduces just one person at a time. You think it could make dating less tiring. Persuade your friend to try it and answer their worries.

Useful phrases

I'm tired of scrolling through hundreds of profiles.

What if it picks someone I don't like?

I'd rather choose for myself.

Who'll be able to see my information?

It couldn't hurt to try it for a month.

Let's see how it goes.

Afterwards, tell the class: did your friend decide to try the service, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 B · 3 C · 4 D · 5 E · 6 G · 7 H · 8 F

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 ambiguous · 2 reluctant · 3 overwhelmed · 4 refreshing · 5 intimate · 6 considered

6 Word forms

1 fertility · 2 structural · 3 transparency · 4 considerable · 5 commercial

7 Language focus

1 set · 2 mounting · 3 vested · 4 stark · 5 raise

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